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DHAHRAN SENDS

E.O. 12958: DECL: 12/29/2018

TAGS: AMGT ASEC CASC PGOV PREL PTER SA

SUBJECT: DHAHRAN EAC MEETING - DECEMBER 28, 2008. REVIEW  
OF SECURITY POSTURE IN LIGHT OF ISRAELI/PALESTINIAN TENSIONS

Classified By: Acting Consul General Julie Stinehart for reasons  
1.4 (d) and (g).

¶1. (S/NF) SUMMARY: On December 28, 2008, the Dhahran Emergency Action Committee (EAC) met to discuss post security posture in light of the rising tensions in the Middle East attributable to the Israeli/Palestinian situation. The Saudi Arabian National Guard (SANG) and Ministry of Interior (MOI) have been asked to increase their presence at the consulate; travel to areas with strong Palestinian support have been discouraged; and the Marines will be restricted should a tripwire be crossed. Present for the meeting were CG, PD, DHS, CONS, RAO, RSO, MSG, and IMO. END SUMMARY.

¶2. (S/NF) The Consul General opened the meeting explaining the EAC was convened to discuss rising tensions in the Middle East. He provided a short review of the situation involving the Israelis and Palestinians. The ARSO reviewed the current security posture and discussed how the tensions in the Middle East impact the consulate staff in the Eastern Province. The EAC members provided no new threat information concerning efforts to specifically target post, off-post housing, or employees assigned to post.

¶3. (S/NF) The ARSO formally requested an additional presence in front of the Consulate General from the SANG and the MOI. This presence was requested to begin December 29, 2008, and terminate on January 3, 2009. This request was made keeping in mind the planned New Year's Eve social event at the consulate and the historical timing of demonstrations. Historically, demonstrations that have occurred near the U.S. Consulate General have occurred after Friday prayer.

¶4. (S/NF) The EAC discussed areas within the Eastern Province that are predominately Shia. It was noted that there were demonstrations in Qatif last week in support of the Palestinians and photographs showed individuals carrying Hezbollah flags. This demonstration occurred prior to the commencement of the latest heightened unrest between Israel and Palestine. The ARSO strongly cautioned against travel to areas within the Eastern Province where there is a strong Shia presence supporting the Palestinians. Additionally, consulate employees should be extra alert and cautious during their movements within the Eastern Province and attempt to be less visible.

¶5. (S/NF) The ARSO discussed the news reporting that Israel presently has massed troops and armor on its border with Gaza. The ARSO advised the EAC that in consultation with the MSG Detachment Commander, the ARSO decided the MSG Detachment would be restricted to the consulate in the event Israel crosses the border into Gaza with its troops. In addition, the off-duty liberties of the MSG Detachment would be restricted should this event occur.

¶6. (S/NF) Dhahran's EAC members unanimously agreed that the security procedures in place presently, along with the requested increase in support from the SANG and MOI, are sufficient to allow the planned New Year's Eve social event. No EAC member offered any additional guidance or suggestions for changes to the security posture.

¶7. (SBU) The Consul General scheduled another EAC meeting for December 30, 2008, to review the situation.

¶8. (SBU) POC for this cable is ARSO Charles Flynn.

(APPROVED: STINEHART)  
RUNDELL